



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Diligence, 1812

Wilmington, North Carolina
Master Joseph Burch

Persistent application to one's work: assiduous effort.

Builder:

Rig:

Length:

Beam:

Draft:

Displacement:

Cost:

Commissioned: 1807

Disposition: Out of service 1831

Compliment:

Armament:

Cutter History:

Cutter: *Diligence* was built and commissioned in Wilmington in 1807, and stationed in Wilmington as well. This cutter was previously un-documented and was the fourth of six cutters named "Diligence." The *Diligence* remained in service until 1831.

Master: Joseph Burch received his commission in North Carolina as a 1st mate for revenue cutter service on March 7, 1797, and was commissioned a revenue cutter master in North Carolina on January 20, 1809. Burch served as master of *Diligence* throughout the War of 1812. Little is known about his postwar career.

War of 1812 Events and Operations:

June 18, 1812. President James Madison signs a declaration of war and the War of 1812 officially begins. The congressional authorization states "*that the President of the United States is hereby authorized to use the whole land and*

naval force of the United States . . . against the vessels, goods, and effects of the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the subjects thereof."

June 18, 1812. Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin sends a circular to all customs collectors, writing only the sentence: "*Sir, I hasten to inform you that War was this day declared against Great Britain*". In a separate circular, Gallatin orders the news dispatched to U.S. naval vessels by revenue cutters stationed at Savannah; Norfolk; Charleston; New York; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Wilmington, Delaware.

August 8, 1812. *Diligence* transports American Major General Thomas Brown and his staff into Wilmington, North Carolina.

August 9, 1812. *Diligence* transports Major General Thomas Brown and staff to Smithville, North Carolina. Military salutes fired and answered between Wilmington and the cutter.

November 29, 1812. *Diligence* rescues survivors of the American brig *Defiance*, bound from New York to Savannah. The vessel capsized in a violent storm offshore, drowning three passengers and washing ashore on Cape Fear, near Wilmington, North Carolina. The crew of *Diligence* helped save some of the brig's cargo and assisted in interring the bodies of the dead at Cape Fear.

December 28, 1812. In response to a letter from the Boston Customs Collector, Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin writes, "*A Revenue Cutter cannot be expressly fitted and employed for the purpose of cruising against an enemy except under the 98th Section of the collection law in which case the Cutter must be placed under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy.*"

September 15, 1813. Under a white flag, an officer from HMS *Pears* delivers to the deputy customs collector at Ocracoke, North Carolina, a notice "*declaring this port, together with Beaufort and all others of note to the southward of this, in a state of blockade; he also informs that all the ports of the United States, to the southward of Boston, are declared to be in the same predicament*" [*Salem* (Massachusetts) *Gazette*, October 5, 1813]

October 17, 1813. British sloop HMS *Recruit* (18) begins a close blockade of Wilmington, North Carolina.

August 8, 1814. Peace negotiations between the United States and Great Britain begin in Ghent, Belgium.

December 24, 1814. Peace treaty (Treaty of Ghent) signed between representatives of the United States and Great Britain at a ceremony in Ghent, Belgium.

January 4, 1815. In response to the destructive effects of the war on commerce, New England delegates to the Hartford Convention claim that “*Commerce, the vital spring of New England’s prosperity, was annihilated. Embargoes, restrictions, and rapacity of revenue officers, had completed its destruction.*”

January 8, 1815. Americans defeat a British army in the Battle of New Orleans in the last major land engagement of the war.

February 11, 1815. Under the white flag, HMS *Favorite* (18) delivers the peace treaty, Treaty of Ghent, to New York City.

February 16, 1815. President Madison signs Treaty of Ghent officially ending the War of 1812.

February 25, 1815. Treasury Secretary Alexander J. Dallas issues a circular to all customs collectors regarding future policy in light of the conclusion of the war. In the two-page circular, he instructs, “[cutter] *officers and men must be recommended for their vigilance, activity, skill and good conduct.*” Dallas later directs that “*Smuggling, in every form, must be prevented, or punished. And if it be not prevented, the officers of the customs, according to their respective duties and stations, will be held answerable to prove, that there was no want of vigilance on their part.*” In the final paragraph, Dallas lists other duties to be carried out by the customs officials, hence their respective cutters, including “*immediate measures will be taken, for restoring the light-houses, piers, buoys, and beacons, within your district and jurisdiction, to the state in which they were before the war*”.

March 3, 1815. Congress repeals “*the acts prohibiting the entrance of foreign vessels into the waters of the United States*”, thereby repealing elements of the Non-Intercourse and Non-Importation acts.

May 30, 1815. Treasury Secretary Alexander Dallas writes the New York customs collector about building one or more schooner-rigged cutters to replace those lost in the war.

Sources:

Cutter History File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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